



## Athlete Profile (National)

### Ken Huber — Say ‘Yes’ to the Challenge!

An athlete, a leader, a winner and a tremendous competitor, veteran athlete Ken Huber returns to the National Veterans Wheelchair Games this year, making a comeback after a two-year sabbatical. Describing the former *Spirit of the Games* award winner is easy when it's Huber, 56, of Milan, Mich. He's an inspiration to us all.

A familiar face at the Games since 1986, Huber competes in the Class IA division. A long-time member of the Ann Arbor VA Wheelchair Team, he has an expansive collection of medals. For him, however, “this event is not about winning medals. It's about teaching people to keep their chin up, to get out there and compete. It lets the seasoned athletes show the new participants how to ‘be all that they can be.’ That's the real beauty of these Games.”

Ken Huber is one person who knows about rising above life's challenges. In 1971, he was 19 years old and serving in the Navy as a jet engine mechanic at the Naval Air Station in Meridian, Mississippi. After a long tour and anxious to get home, he accepted a ride from a fellow sailor and was seriously injured in a car accident, leaving him a high-level quadriplegic. It wasn't until 1986 that he was convinced to try the Wheelchair Games, then only in their infancy. “I was afraid,” Huber admits – afraid of traveling as well as competing in sports, and nervous about trying things he wasn't sure he'd be able to do.

After success at the Games, his newfound motivation got Huber involved with the local wheelchair team in Ann Arbor, and he later accepted a position as Sports Director of the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) chapter. Later, he became sports director, served on the Board, and eventually became chapter president. After a few years, Huber advanced to positions in the national PVA office in Washington, D.C., culminating in his election as national president in 1997 and 1998. He continues to be active in the organization today.

In spite of his busy schedule, Huber enjoys competing in the Games and was the first PVA national president to compete in the events while holding office. This year, he will compete in power soccer and motorized track events. After years of winning gold medals in sports like the wheelchair slalom, now he likes competing in team sports like power soccer.

“The Games are a time of renewal and rededication to those things in everyday life that are the most important to me, which is family, friendships and striving to improve on those relationships to make them better,” Huber says. “I return to the Games year after year because of the many positive changes it has made in my life, the support of others at the event, being there to share with first-time participants, developing new relationships, enjoying the camaraderie and tremendous spirit of all the athletes.”

To any veterans who may be interested in something new but have never tried the Games, Ken Huber likes to quote an old Wheelchair Games slogan, one that he still uses quite often – “say ‘yes’ to the challenge!”